A Response to “Ancient Myths in the Golden Dawn System of Initiation”

posted to the “Golden Dawn Blog” on July 11, 2005, by “V.H. Frater TSO.”

OSOGD had come under fire for its redactions of the classic Golden Dawn rituals. Our response:

A Statement by the Adepts of the Het Nuit Temple, Open Source Order Order of the Golden Dawn (OSOGD)
The original essay by Brother T.S.O. of the Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn (EOGD) can be found here.
(Updated on 7-25-2005)

Key references:
The version of the Golden Dawn 0=0 Hall of the Neophyte practiced by Isis-Urania Lodge of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (England, 1888) can be viewed here.
The version practiced by the Het-Nuit Lodge of the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn (California, 2001) can be viewed here.

We offer this rebuttal in the spirit of open debate, and fully recognizing that our fraters and sorors of the greater Golden Dawn community have the inalienable right to do the Great Work as their own Will guides them.

Our Response:


We do not fear informed debate and healthy criticism, but our Brother is offering little of either. Still, it is his opinion, and our Brother has every right to express it. But he makes certain statements that are not logically consistent, and others which are contrary to established and respected scholarship in field of Magic, and of Ancient History and Anthropology. So as a public service, we must try again to bring a Brother to the path of the Facts, educate him, and hopefully educate others in the process.

For the purposes of clarity and completeness, Brother TSO’s essay will be quoted in its entirety and the issues it raises addressed point-by-point.

Brother TSO writes: “The initiatory system of the Golden Dawn finds its roots, as we all understand, in the various mystery Cults of the ancient times.”

Our Brother begins entering into error with his first sentence. We do not “all understand” any such thing. While the Golden Dawn rites use some names and phrases from the Eleusinian and Samothracian Mysteries, no other traces from the Mysteries of classical times can be assuredly found therein. This is because little is known of those Mysteries, though much is speculated. Rather, in the Golden Dawn, the terms and usages from classical Mysteries were layered on a foundation of the Masonic Mysteries and Rites, namely those of the Blue Lodge. It’s surprising that our Brother doesn’t even mention Freemasonry as a source of Golden Dawn ritual practice, when it is indisputably the most influential one. While this will be self-evident to any initiate of Freemasonry, as were the founders of the Golden Dawn, any of the published versions of the Masonic Rites should suffice to demonstrate this modest claim.

And while the Golden Dawn was a system of secret initiatory rites, it is not a mystery tradition at all, but rather a Neoplatonic theurgic system founded upon the teachings of Iamblichus of Chalsis who died in 330 CE.

Brother TSO writes: “And although it is important to examine these mysteries and cults there is an important barrier or line to be drawn that should not be crossed. And this is the fact, that not all past myths are compatible with the current of the Golden Dawn.”

Our Brother makes a profound claim here that is directly contradicted by the syncretic quality of the Golden Dawn ritual corpus itself. In it, we find traces of the Eleusinia, the Samothracian Mysteries, the Chaldean Oracles, versions of Qabalah and Alchemy, several flavors of the myths of Ancient Egypt, Freemasonry, Tarot, Geomancy, Enochian, Tattwas, Torah & Psalms, New Testament, and no doubt much more. From the presence of this vast and divergent range of sources all woven into the fabric of our tradition, it is difficult to tell how any one could blithely state that there is a clear line ‘that should not be crossed’. Rather, the Golden Dawn is an encyclopedic system, designed on an open architecture to be able to use all of the Western Tradition of magical practice plus a selection of Eastern elements, for example the Tattwas and to some extent the Buddhadharmma. All of these elements can be found in the original British Lodges, and even more have been incorporated into the system by many contemporary practitioners, such as the Chakras of Hinduism, the Holy Guardian Angel of the Magic of Abra-Melin, and the Thelemic concept of True Will.

In the face of this vast diversity, what our Brother needs to do is offer a reasonable explanation of where this line should be drawn, and
With Osiris, identifying his mythology with Christian mythology is therefore difficult to support. There are some similarities, but there are vital distinctions. The continuous cycle of the God's death and rebirth, but of a single death and a single rebirth. The process is not repeated. This is a significant difference. Such is the theme of Persephone. By contrast, the Christ mythology does not call for an endless cycle of cycles. The idea of Osiris being a merciful redeemer of sins, where Osiris is a harsh judge. When you examine and compare the two myths, they really don't map to each other very well.

Many of these mythological motifs our Brother presents were cyclic in nature, as they expressed the Pagan view of the Cycles of the Seasons. This is one thing we can be sure of. Such is the theme of Persephone. By contrast, the Christ mythology does not call for an endless cycle of cycles. The idea of Osiris being a merciful redeemer of sins, where Osiris is a harsh judge. When you examine and compare the two myths, they really don't map to each other very well.

It's a grave error of interpretation, in our opinion, to confuse the stories of Osiris with "resurrection" in the Christian sense. To conflate the Osiris cycle with the Christian concept of resurrection would mean that Osiris would have descended into the Underworld (Hell) and remained there for all eternity. This is a serious flaw in our Brother's argument.

We really know very little about the Eleusinian Mysteries today. There is a dearth of hard data, but a wealth of speculation. We know they were annual festivals held in honor of Demeter and Persephone, but the only direct archaeological evidence is in the form of a few statues, bas reliefs, and pottery, none of which detail the central Mysteries. Certain ancient writers such as Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Sophokles, Herodotus and Pausanias were Initiates, but they were prohibited from revealing the Mysteries by oaths of secrecy. Other writers, not being Initiates, speculated on these Mysteries (such as Plutarch, Hippolytus and Tertullian.) But as they were not Initiates, they only offer circumstantial evidence and inferences, and there is still no consensus among scholars today as to what did or did not constitute the core of their Mysteries. To claim a direct line can be drawn from the Eleusinia to the Golden Dawn is a wild speculation at best.

Perhaps our Brother believes that since the Eleusinian Mysteries involved Persephone, and that the Osiran Rite of the Golden Dawn his Order practices is based on a "death and rebirth" cycle, that makes a connection, however tenuous. But nowhere in the foundational document of the Golden Dawn, the Cipher Manuscript, is there any identification with Osiris or his myths. This was an addition in the Z Documents, presumably by Mathers. So we suppose one could make a case for there being a connection to Osirian-style Golden Dawn rituals and the Persephone cycle, but that is not inherent in the Cipher, but applied by Mathers and his successors later.

Brother TSO writes: "With the Eleusinian Mysteries as an ancestral mystery school for the Golden Dawn direction is taken to a specific set of Mysteries in the ancient times: the Isis-Osiris Cult of ancient Egypt which later became the Isis-Mysteries in Rome, the Cult of the Kabirs in Samothrace, the Mysteries of Persephone and Hades, also known as the Eleusinian Mysteries or the Mithras Mysteries to name a few."

Our Brother continues claiming a direct descendent from the Mysteries of classical times, for which he still offers no evidence. If reputable scholars in the field cannot agree on the true nature of these Mysteries, how can our Brother be so certain? How is this "direction taken" to these later cults he mentions? They cannot be shown to be related. We know next to nothing about the Kabiri, except their names, so how can our Brother state with such conviction that the "Isis-Osiris cult" is the direct precursor to the Samothracian Mysteries? We recommend that our Brother study these Mysteries in respected academic research texts and become better acquainted with the scholarship on these Mysteries. (see citations provided below.)

Brother TSO writes: "All these mysteries and initiatory cults circle around the idea of birth and a fertile life in the beginning, followed by the tragedy of death and descent into the underworld, which is then followed by the process of resurrection or rebirth. These ideas are encapsulated in the mystical word IAO, which yields LVX, the Light that shines in the Darkness. In the Inner more advanced Order of the R.R. et A.C. this leads to the fundament of Christian Mysticism."

Our Brother now makes further claims while offering no evidence or citations. Certainly we commend our Brother in the application of the IAO/LVX formula to the Christian slain and risen cycle, even though Christians tend to confuse Set with Apophis/Typhon. The manifestation of that Light is a profound, good, and holy thing, a most beneficial practice. And we hope he finds comfort in a Christian application of that formula. Most of us of the OSOGD do not. To claim that Classical Pagan Theurgy can be properly comprehended only through the lens of Christianity is the height of hubris; the ancient Pagans had no problem comprehending their Mysteries for thousands of years. However, of course that is exactly what the Medieval Christian Church actually did, for which we roundly chastise them.

No one knows the true nature of these Mysteries since the initiates all died without revealing them. They were serious about secrecy in those days, but that also meant that when the Mysteries failed and the initiates died off, there was no way to recover them. (One point of the Open Source Movement is to never let this happen again.) We have no way of knowing if the Mysteries our Brother claims to have chased were all focused on the slain and risen archetype, and what evidence we have points in several directions. Of the Samothracian Kabiri we know next to nothing, we have only their Images and Names. Ulansey shows how the Mithraic Mysteries ultimately were about changing astrologically determined fate. The Isiac Mysteries may have been more about identifying with the Great Mother archetype. Although Kore (Persephone) of the Eleusinian Mysteries goes to the Underworld, she does not die and in fact becomes queen of the Underworld and lives half her life there. And finally, Osiris is never resurrected nor is he reborn. (This is why he had to blackmail the other Gods into putting His son Horus on the Throne of Ra.)

It’s a grave error of interpretation, in our opinion, to confuse the stories of Osiris with "resurrection" in the Christian sense. To conflated the myth of Christ with the myth of Osiris would mean that Christ would have descended into the Underworld (Hell) and remained there forever to be the judge of the dead, like Osiris, and never resurrected to earth, much less ascended into heaven. The very idea of Christ presiding over Hell would be blasphemous to any Christian theologian. That they are both "judges of the dead" is one similarity, but Christ is a merciful redeemer of sins, while Osiris is a harsh judge. When you examine and compare the two myths, they really don’t map to each other very well.

Many of these mythological motifs our Brother presents were cyclic in nature, as they expressed the Pagan view of the Cycles of the Seasons. This is one thing we can be sure of. Such is the theme of Persephone. By contrast, the Christ mythology does not call for an continuous cycle of the God’s death and rebirth, but of a single death and a single rebirth. The process is not repeated. This is a vital distinction.

With Osiris, identifying his mythology with Christian mythology is therefore difficult to support. There are some similarities, but there are
also glaring differences. Osiris never returns to "life”—his body is reassembled, but he is still dead. He cannot move (which is why he is always symbolically depicted in tight mummy wrappings), and he cannot procreate (as that is the ONE body part that was not recovered). He can never return to the Land of the Living, and instead must remain forever at the Gate to the Underworld. He never actually enters the Underworld either—he must remain eternally at the Gate. By contrast, the myth of the risen Christ states that he "ascendeth into Heaven, and sitteth upon the right hand of God the Father Almighty" If there is a parallel to this in Egyptian religion, it would be with Ra-Hoor, son of Osiris and King of the Living, who ascends to the heavens and pilots the Ship of Ra (the life-giving all-Father.)

Of the Samothracian Mysteries' Kabiri, we know even less about them than we do the Eleusinian. We only have textural fragments, and we have no idea how the originators actually used them. We do know that Wynn Westcott's placing the texts of the Chaldean Oracles in the mouths of the Kabiri, claiming they were attributed to Zoaraster, is unwarranted, although clever as a ritual form. The real author was Julian the Chaldean and his son Julian the Theurgist, writing around 200CE, and what fragments have survived of the work of the "two Julians", the Cipher Manuscript worked into the 3=8 Hall.

The most reliable sources for Chaldean texts are second-hand, from the works of the Pagan Neo-Platonic philosophers, but other than that we have only the shards of pottery, and occasional references in other writings. However, nowhere is it thought among scholars that the Chaldean Oracles were consonant with a death and rebirth mythology cycle.

This is always the danger in conflating ancient mythologies with each other and with modern interpretations. While various themes recur across cultures (because we are all human, after all), the way these themes are assembled into mythological constructs is always unique.

There are certain "archetypes" that are inherently part of any human-derived mystical or religious symbol-set. But a particular godform that covers a certain range of these archetypes don't very often map directly to each other. Take the Hellenic god Zeus (Jupiter), for example. Besides being the "King" of the gods—the "sky-father"—another one of Zeus's roles is as the god of thunder and lightning. The god Ba'al of the Canaanites is also a sky-father and thunder god. But in the Nordic pantheon, the king and sky-father god Odin is NOT the thunder god—that role is taken by Thor. The Hellenic god of the Underworld is Pluto (Hades), but to the Norse, the ruler of the Underworld is a female deity, Hel, and her dominan is a frozen wasteland, not a burning fire pit. Odin is also the god of wisdom, but to the Egyptians, that god is Thoth, and Set is the god of the storms, whereas the supreme sky-father is the sun-god Atum-Ra (at one point, Aten-Ra). BUT, to the Hellenics, the sun-god is Helios (Apollo), not the sky-father Zeus. To the Norse, the sun-god was Baldur, a son of the sky-father, like Helios. And the Egyptians of the later dynasties elevated Osiris, god of death and the Underworld, to the status of "king of the gods", though at different times that "king" was Atum, or at other times an aspect of Ra and Horus, or in Memphis, Ptah.

So it's obvious that these godforms and their attributes are not directly interchangeable across pantheons of differing cultures, because they almost always mix the basic archetypes differently. The archetypes themselves—sun god, thunder god, father god, wisdom god, death god, dying-and-reborn god—are consistent, but how these aspects are divvied up among the various pantheons can be strikingly different. Even in closely matched cultures there are differences. The Greek Hermes is in many ways unlike the Roman Mercury, even though their roots are the same. Therefore, it's an error to say that, for example, the "sky-fathers" Odin and Zeus and Ra are really the same archetypical god with different names.

All the more erroneous to assert that Osiris is really Christ with a different name, and that their myths closely parallel each other.

Brother TSO writes: "Jesus Christ once said that he did not come to abrogate the prophets, but to fulfill them. He fulfilled all the above-mentioned osirian myths of the past and united them in his passion, resurrection and ascension."

Jesus was referring to the Hebrew prophets and Mosaic law specifically; it was not a declaration of "fulfillment" of ALL "prophets", particularly not the Pagan Mysteries, which weren't really "prophets" at all. This is a logical fallacy known as "hasty generalization." Our Brother makes such errors of inappropriate generalization throughout his essay.

Brother TSO writes: "The ancient alchemists in their writings, such as Raimundus Lullius, Michael Maier, Johannes Trithemius, Basilius Valentinus and many others, have adapted this process."

Indeed, this is one reading of these late medieval (Lull & Trithemius) and Renaissance (Maier & Valentinus) [not ancient] authors. But since the content of their practice was, save for Lull, originally Classical Pagan, there is no certain test as to how THEY saw what they did. Obviously, these philosophers had no choice but to cover their work in the trappings of Christianity, since to do otherwise they would risk the fate of their fellow alchemist Giordano Bruno, who was executed by the Roman Church for heresy. We of the OSGD prefer to see their work as crypto-Pagan —that is, appearing to be Christian by a veneer of Christian pietistic statements and symbolism; what amounts to a coat of paint over the older, deeper Classical Pagan practice and symbolism.

Our Brother also completely ignores the rich traditions of Arabian Alchemy, which apply the same alchemical principles, but, of course, without the trappings of Christianity. The word "alchemy" itself is derived from the Arabic. The existence of this vast, non-Christian Alchemical tradition, which in fact was the original source of the works of the later European Alchemists, is proof enough of our Brother's erroneous and limited perspective.

Brother TSO writes: "In this we understand now that not every myth of the ancient times is suited for study within the Golden Dawn or for that matter the whole Hermetic tradition of magic, but only those based upon the above mentioned idea. There is a common misconception that the image of the Ship of Ra can be applied to the Golden Dawn, but this could not be further from the truth. Keep in mind that this is not even a myth, but a mere image accompanied by some Hieroglyphs."

Here, we must call our Brother on his woeful lack of Egyptological scholarship.

The most important early source for the Sun God is in the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom, a collection of spells describing the fate of the deceased king in the Underworld which are carved on the walls of royal tombs of the late Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. The protagonist is the king, who in death has become one with his heavenly father, Ra. The texts exhibit a highly developed theology. The Sun God is not a clearly defined individual, but instead has several names and images. His multiplicity is a reflection of his many capabilities. The Pyramid Texts describe Ra as the Sun that rises on the Eastern horizon in the morning in the shape of a scarab beetle whose name is Kephara ("the emerging one"). The Scarab in his Bark is lifted by the personified primordial waters, or Nun. During the day Ra traverses the sky in his Bark, accompanied by a large entourage of gods; at sunset he becomes Atum, "All-Lord". No one can halt his course.
This is far more than just a "mere image".
The tale of Ra and his Bark are directly related to the transition of the King from human life to Godhood, as well as the journey of any deceased spirit. "Pyramid Utterance 264", is the following poem, which is the archetype of becoming a Mage:

The reed-floats of the sky are set down for Horus,
That he may cross on them to the horizon, to Harakhti.
The reed-floats of the sky are set down for me,
That I may cross on them to the horizon, to Harakhti.
The reed-floats of the sky are set down for Shezmeti,
That he may cross on them to the horizon, to Harakhti.
The reed-floats of the sky are set down for me,
That I may cross on them to the horizon, to Harakhti.
The Nurse-canal is opened,
The Winding Waterway is flooded,
The Field of Rushes are filled with water,
And I am ferried over,
To yonder eastern side of the sky,
To the place the Gods fashioned for me,
Wherein I was born, new and young.

(Translation: R. O. Faulkner)

Note the identification of the deceased Spirit with Horus (Harakhti), and how the Spirit joins Horus to traverse the sky to the horizon.
Note also that the journey ends at the EASTERN side of the sky, not the western. This clearly indicates that the journey is one through the night—in fact, the "Nurse-canal" refers to the Milky Way, and "the Field of Rushes" is the celestial landscape—to be reborn, "new and young", with the dawn.

Furthermore, note that the Death and Rebirth motif is through the identification with Harakhti, "Horus of his Horizon".

It is extremely odd for our Brother to refer to the Pyramid Texts, arguably the single most important source of Ancient Egyptian mythology, as "a mere image accompanied by some Hieroglyphs." One might as well refer to the US Constitution as "a mere piece of parchment with some ink on it."

By this point our Brother has lined up a series of statements and drawn a conclusion as though his statements constituted a logical argument. Unfortunately for us all they don't. If we were to attempt to frame his logic for him it would seem he is saying that:
a) since the Golden Dawn rites are founded on the mystery traditions and
b) since all of the mystery traditions are based on the Slain and Risen formula (by whatever nomenclature), and
c) since, incidentally, all of those mystery traditions were summed up, fulfilled and can be found in the Christian Mysteries, and
d) since this formula was used by the 'ancient alchemists' noted,
Therefore: Any other myths are not compatible with the Golden Dawn system.

However, so far we have shown that:
Premise (a) is false.
Premise (b) is also false.
Premise (c), built on premise (b), is therefore also false.
Premise (d) is true, but the reason for that is disputable.
Therefore, our Brother's conclusions must also be false.

While we can presume there are some myths on this world incompatible with the Golden Dawn system, our Brother has not put forth either evidence nor reason to demonstrate his hypothesis that ONE myth, and only one myth—the Slain-and-Risen God—forms the basis of virtually all Western Mysteries from time immemorial, and therefore is the ONLY myth appropriate to Golden Dawn (or any other) High Magic.

Yet he persists as if these false premises prove his case.

Brother TSO writes: "The Osirian mystery cults belong to the so-called Nighttime Religion a specific set of religious, initiatory practices that involve the human soul and its salvation from oblivion and darkness. Whereas, the myths like the Ship of Ra and others, such as Ra and Hathor, Dionysos, Apis, which all yielded cults, belong to the so-called Daylight Religion which was only concerned with the well being of a particular community, city or country. Their system of initiation was fundamentally different from the ones that eventually yielded the Golden Dawn; its only concern was having a happy and complacent life here on earth than with the salvation of the Soul after death, and/or its spiritual growth and eventual union with God."

Brother, may we acquaint you with the 'Am Duat', the oldest guidebook to the Journey of the Dead that we have? It has nothing to do with a "happy and complacent life here on earth." In it, the Bark of Ra sails through the 12 Pylons (hours) of the Night to renew the Solar God to rise again at the Dawn. It was the hope of its Initiates to join Ra as part of the Crew of His Bark, along with the Gods of Egypt, to travel with the God, be renewed of Flesh and Spirit, defend the God against his Enemies and the challenges of the Night Passage, and rise with Him at the Golden Dawn to take their place among the Legions of the Living.

Again, this is no "mere image accompanied by some Hieroglyphs", but a fully developed theological discourse.

Brother, may we also acquaint you with the aforementioned Pyramid Texts, the oldest writings about the Afterlife in existence? In them they speak of the ascent of the King, and like Him all initiates, to the Stars to join the Bark of Ra on Its Eternal Journey. Think it well or ill, this was the metaphor used by the Pyramid Builders to describe the path of spiritual attainment. This is starkly contrasted with the Osirian current in Utterance 215: "Re-Atum will not give you to Osiris, and He will not claim your heart nor have power over your heart… O Osiris, you will never have power over him..."

This is because Osiris is the path of reincarnation in the "flesh" not the path of spiritual ascension. Osiris leads the Deceased to the Afterlife, which is not much different than life on earth, only better. A "happy and complacent life", to use our Brother's description. This is appropriate as Osiris is the Egyptian 'John Barleycorn' or Tammuz, the Grain God who is cut down and rises again in and as his
The unique use of 'Khabs' meaning in Classical Egyptian 'Night Sky', but taken as 'star' or 'ray of light' in the Golden Dawn and added the Hermetic Qabalah, developed starting in the Florentine Renaissance with Pico della Mirandola. One schooled in each of The Golden Dawn system, including its Thelemic aspects, derives primarily from "the same root": Iamblician Theurgy which in turn does. Whether or not they—or we — are "Thelemic" is not the issue.

Indeed some Orders—such as the Thelemic Golden Dawn (T.G.D.) that do not adhere to the Cipher's framework, but the OSOGD original framework—the Cipher Manuscript —that we believe defines a "Golden Dawn Order" — any Golden Dawn Order. There are still founded exactly on their Golden Dawn precursors. In our redaction of the Golden Dawn ritual corpus, we've adhered to the practice is richly strengthened with the insights of Thelema, and any Thelemic ritual practice is difficult to conceive of without the

Brother TSO writes: "In addition these latter myths were never included in any modern mystery school or Order such as the Knights Templar, the Rosicrucian Order, the Knights of Saint John, the Martinist Order, and the Order of the Golden Dawn etc, which all came forth from the Osirian/ Christian mysteries."

We concur that these magical initiatory systems, formulated during the Piscene Age, appropriately followed the formula of that age, the Slain and Risen. However, Liber AL vel Legis (The Book of Law), using the formula of the Golden Dawn, without which the text can not be properly read, announced the new dispensation which shifts the formula for the dawning Age to that of the Crowned and Conquering Child, exemplified by Ra-Hoor-Khuit ascending to the Throne of Ra. This coincides with the "dawning of the Age of Aquarius" of story and song, the transition of the 2000 year Aeon of Pisces to Aquarius, following the Procession of the Equinoxes. In fact, the Mithraic Mysteries are believed to have been centered around the Procession of the Equinoxes. So it is not an entirely Thelemic concept, but a truly ancient Mystery, and the proof of this transition to a "New Age" is self-evident in the world around us and needs no supporting argument; it would only be overstating the obvious.

The main difference of the Solar formula is that of placing the emphasis not on the death part of the process, which is seen as transient and thus trivial, but on the birth portion of the cycle with concomitant focus on the Child thus born. In this formula, after Initiation, the attention is placed on the awakening, education and maturation of the inner Divine Child of the Initiate, resulting in that phenomenon known as "Knowledge & Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel", and eventual entrance into the Company of the Gods.

Brother TSO writes: "Until one man took these other myths and forced them into the Golden Dawn system, thereby heavily violating and corrupting the original system such that it could no longer be called Golden Dawn or Hermeticism at large. This man is Aleister Crowley and the new system he invented is today known as Thelema."

Before we can even address the logic of this statement we would need our Brother to state something more than this indefensible opinion. Liber AL, as mentioned above and easily demonstrated, is written in the symbol set of the Golden Dawn. A reader without knowledge of the Golden Dawn will not understand many of the references. Most of the ritual technique given in Crowley’s “Magick in Theory and Practice” is directly derived from the Golden Dawn. How is this a violation and corruption of the original system? (We suspect that would actually be very hard to do). Further, to evaluate our brother’s assertion, he would need to provide us with some definition of Hermeticism—without making flat religious statements like “Hermeticism is Christian” —that could somehow exclude Thelema. For example, produce a description of Hermetic Alchemy that is inclusive of both European (Christian) and Arabic (Islamic) forms, but NOT inclusive of Thelema. Considering that many of the doctrines presented in Liber AL, never mind the rest of the Thlemaic Holy Books, are completely derived from the Hermetic Corpus, we look forward to our Brother’s heroic attempt to come up with what would be required to make such a definition.

If his only defense is that Hermeticism is exclusively "Christian", perhaps it would be better if our Brother actually studied the Hermetic Corpus instead (including the Arabian Alchemists, who obvioulsy were not Christians, and the Jewish Alchemists as well). The religion professed by the Medieval and Renaissance Hermeticists is no proof that the system is exclusive to that religion, or any religion. They cast it in the only terms they could, for to do otherwise, even if they wanted to, would have been risking their freedom, their livelihoods, even torture and death. Thus it proves nothing.

Brother TSO writes: “Thus we see that Thelema is not a further development of the Golden Dawn and does not belong to the ancient tradition of Hermeticism; it is in fact a violation of the fundamentals of that system.”

This statement is a merely flat assertion without any explanation or supporting evidence. The argument is circular: “We see that Thelema is not a further development of the Golden Dawn, because we see that Thlema is not a further development of the Golden Dawn.” This is a rhetorical way of saying, “It isn’t because I say it isn’t.” Nowhere in this entire essay has our Brother offered much in the way of evidence or a made logical case for his assertions, but simply makes a series of declarations that we can only suppose he expects his readers to accept on blind faith alone. As we have demonstrated with reason, facts and references to legitimate scholarship, his declarations about ancient mystery cults and Hermeticism are tenuous, and in many cases demonstrably false. In fact, the only evidence it presents is that of our Brother’s overall ignorance of the material. He offers no examples of Thelemic doctrine (doctrine actually written or expounded by Thelemites) to demonstrate his assertions about what does or does not constitute Thelema. His scholarship is highly suspect and we therefore find it impossible to give any credit to his further unfounded assertions about the nature of Thelema and how it relates to the Western Mystery Tradition in general, or to the Golden Dawn system in particular.

Brother TSO writes: “There are Orders today, that have developed a Thlemic system free of any relation to the Golden Dawn, and this we simply call a different system, but the belief that they stem from the same root is utterly false. Thlema and the classical Golden Dawn system of initiation and magic have nothing in common other than the fact that they both use the Qabalah in their rites.”

We wonder what Orders our Brother is referring to? Certainly not the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn! Our Golden Dawn practice is richly strengthened with the insights of Thlema, and any Thlemic ritual practice is difficult to conceive of without the technology and symbolism of the Golden Dawn. The few purely Thlemic rituals Crowley wrote, principally the Star Ruby and Reguli, are still founded exactly on their Golden Dawn precursors. In our reedition of the Golden Dawn ritual corpus, we've adhered to the original framework—the Cipher Manuscript —that we believe defines a “Golden Dawn Order” — any Golden Dawn Order. There are indeed some Orders—such as the Thelemic Golden Dawn (T.G.D.) that do not adhere to the Cipher’s framework, but the OSOGD does. Whether or not they—or we — are ‘Thelemic’ is not the issue.

The Golden Dawn system, including its Thlemic aspects, derives primarily from “the same root”: Iamblician Theurgy which in turn is founded upon Pythagoras, Plato, the Greek Oracles, and Classical liturgical practice (Egyptian, Greek and Mesopotamian). To this was added the Hermetic Qabalah, developed starting in the Florentine Renaissance with Pico della Mirandola. One schooled in each of these would find them all in Thlema, along with much symbolism and technology unique to the Golden Dawn. Two quick examples are (1) the unique use of ‘Khabs’ meaning in Classical Egyptian ‘Night Sky’, but taken as ‘star’ or ‘ray of light’ in the Golden Dawn and (2)...
But still, Mithras never died.

We appreciate the support of free speech and free will our Brother added to his article. We certainly share this view.

proposed by the Myths in the Past and fulfilled by Jesus Christ, Osiris, Mithra, etc."

But the conflation of Osiris with Christ seems very odd since Osiris never rises from the Dead as does Christ. It is our opinion that the conflation of Osiris with Christ should be avoided, since it is not supported by the evidence and it is not consistent with the teachings of the Golden Dawn.

Annu to those of Osiris at Abydos, so we have developed a form of Golden Dawn practice called the Hoorian Rite.

"The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn does not condone or believe in Satanism, and it should be stated very clearly that the traditional Golden Dawn has absolutely nothing to do with Satanism or Luciferianism or Thelema. We adhere to the principle of the ancient Brotherhood of the Rose and Cross and the mysteries of Life, Death and Resurrection as proposed by the Myths in the Past and fulfilled by Jesus Christ, Osiris, Mithra, etc."

Sadly, here again it appears our Brother is simply being rude and displaying his ignorance, conflating Thelema with other currents our Brother holds as ill. We recommend to him the works in the following bibliography that he may continue his education and longer speak the truth.

ADDENDUM: After a number of complaints about the tone and rhetoric of this blog posting, including some on their own e-lists by their own membership, on 7/14/05 the EOGD altered the text somewhat, most notably these changes made to the last paragraph of the article:

"The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn does not condone or believe in Satanism, and it should be stated very clearly that the traditional Golden Dawn has absolutely nothing to do with Satanism or Luciferianism or Thelema. If people wish to practice in such a form we defend their right to do so, as our Order stands as a guardian for free speech and free will. However, let it be made completely clear that Our Order adheres to the principle of the ancient Brotherhood of the Rose and Cross and the mysteries of Life, Death and Resurrection as proposed by the Myths in the Past and fulfilled by Jesus Christ, Osiris, Mithra, etc."

What our Greatly Honored Sister called the “Third Empire”, we call the “New Aeon”, the Aeon of Ra-Horus. It is no surprise that a powerful clairvoyant and Golden Dawn Adept such as G.H. Sr. S.S.D.D. foresaw the coming of our new age. Not only foresaw it, as the next step in spiritual evolution beyond the “Empire of mistaken sacrifice”, but hailed its coming. We couldn’t agree with her more.

Light-bearer of Darkness” is such an odd phrase that we’ll give it a pass for now, but our Brother goes on to accuse Thelema, and by extension the OSOGD, of being Satanic, in so many words. First of all, since we do not accept Christian theology, we can’t be Satanic. That Averse God is not part of our pantheon, but is part of the Christian pantheon, a sort of “fourth member” of the Trinity. So it’s not our problem. Lucifer as Light Bearer we understand, but has no active part in our way or process, even though Lucifer figures prominently in the Masonic Mysteries. Aep/Apophis doesn’t oppose Osiris (or Christ) but does oppose Ra, and we who have joined the Divine Crew of the Bark of Ra give Apep battle every night in the Darkest Hour before the Dawn so the Sun may be Reborn, and we with Him. The Serpent of Entropy is slain every night by Set, mightiest of the company of the gods, with a Spear so heavy that only he among the gods can lift it.

However, in other tales Set does oppose Osiris (and Horus), and therein lie great mysteries. (Including many Mysteries of Sexual Magic, but these are beyond the scope of this response.) But for us, the Death Cult of Osiris that our Brother has proposed is of no great importance, since we assume our members to be adults and the Osiris story is only that of becoming at peace with death, the mark of adulthood. Thus the stories (they are many and varied) of the Contendings of Horus (not Osiris) and Set are more appropriate for making Magi, for in those stories the Two Contenders provide cosmic-level balance. We of the OSOGD prefer the Solar/Ra rites of Annu to those of Osiris at Abydos, so we have developed a form of Golden Dawn practice called the Hoorian Rite.

But the conflation of Osiris with Christ seems very odd since Osiris never rises from the Dead as does Christ. It is our opinion that the early Golden Dawn practitioners, principally Mathers, simply “bolted on” the Osiran motif to the Golden Dawn framework, as it looked the closest to the Christian myths with which they were familiar. We commend their effort, handicapped as they were by the limitations on Ancient Egyptian knowledge one hundred years ago, but we choose to apply the further revelations about Egyptian Magic disclosed since the inception of Egyptology in the mid-1800s, principally through academic and archeological research by major Universities around the world, and by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture’s Supreme Council of Antiquities. We suggest our Brother familiarize himself with the latest scholarship from these sources, before he makes further attempts at amateur Egyptology. Especially since his entire argument rests on his description of Ancient Egyptian myths being historically accurate, and thereby forming an unbroken continuum to Christian Hermeticism.

Brother TSO writes: “The Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn does not condone or believe in Satanism, and it should be stated very clearly that the traditional Golden Dawn has absolutely nothing to do with Satanism or Luciferianism or Thelema. We adhere to the principle of the ancient Brotherhood of the Rose and Cross and the mysteries of Life, Death and Resurrection as proposed by the Myths in the Past and fulfilled by Jesus Christ, Osiris, Mithra, etc.”

Oh, and by the way, Brother—Mithras never died.
The Golden Dawn “system of magic” is a tool designed to educate the student of the esoteric in both practical matters of ritual and divination, and in abstract metaphysical ideas. The focus of the Golden Dawn material is primarily Western - i.e., Judeo-Christian, Greek, and Egyptian - but some Eastern ideas have crept in over the years. In the Inner Order, the Rosicrucian drama enacted in the initiation rituals is reminiscent of that in the “Rose Croix” degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, and is certainly related to the ceremonies of the Masonic Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, from which the Golden Dawn was indirectly spawned. Recently, Regardie's role in the propagation of Golden Dawn documents has been called into question. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (Latin: Ordo Hermeticus Aurorae Aureae; or, more commonly, the Golden Dawn (Aurora Aurea)) was an organization devoted to the study and practice of the occult, metaphysics, and paranormal activities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Known as a magical order, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was active in Great Britain and focused its practices on theurgy and spiritual development. Many present-day concepts of ritual and magic that are at